

Winter 2023 Edition



# COMMUNIO

Newsletter of the Brothers and Sisters  
of St. Francis Region



"And this will be a sign for you,  
you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.  
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host  
praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" Luke 2:12-14

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**Welcome to the latest issue of the Communio, your quarterly newsletter from Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.**

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# Priest, Prophet and King – St Francis

By Ellen Ferrone, OFS  
BSSF Regional Minister

Every day is a day to be grateful for the love and generosity of our God, family, friends, and fraternity sisters and brothers.

We are in the season of gratitude and joy, outwardly celebrated by many. Times like this bring to mind our baptismal call to be priest, prophet, and king, especially in the context of our seraphic father Francis.

As a priest, Francis preached always. How do I preach? With kind words, and sincere gestures--actions that speak louder than words.

As Prophet, in Francis’s simple desire to remind the people of the Rieti Valley of the humble beginnings of Our Lord, he said to Brother John, go and make things ready to celebrate the birth of Our Lord.

How am I a prophet? Do I see the needs of others, especially those on the margins and work to end injustices?

Eight hundred years later we as Franciscans take a special joy in this celebration of the humility of Our God. Article 11 of our Rule says, “Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life...Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs...” let us recommit ourselves to a humble life.

As king, Francis cared for his brothers, the Poor Clares, the lepers, and the marginalized. As kings, may we all encounter and embrace those on the margins in our society.

My prayer for us all is that in this holy season we may all live our Franciscan lives as priest, prophet, and king.

May the Lord bless us and keep us safe.

Peace

*Ellen*



*Ellen Ferrone, OFS, Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional minister, is a member of Padre Pio Fraternity, Raleigh, NC.*

# Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

By Lynn Oeser, OFS  
BSSF Regional Formation Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters.,

In the month of November, the church remembers and prays for the souls of the departed. We pray for our loved ones and we contemplate ourselves and the time when we will meet Sister Death. Most of us have a good part of life behind us. Sometimes, though, Sister death comes to a child.

Several years ago, my husband and I were ready to downsize and “de-stuff.” We had a lot to get rid of. We began the laborious process, of sorting things into bins. One labeled keep, one give-away, and one “decide later.”

I tried to be ruthless, but there was one item, a wooden plaque of *A Child’s Bedtime Prayer*. I wasn’t particularly attached to it. I didn’t know where it came from. It never hung on my children’s wall. In spite of that I found myself breaking my criteria. I kept moving the plaque from bin to bin. This went on for weeks.

I was working at a large pediatric clinic at the time. Walking into work one morning I crossed paths with a colleague who was weeping. She had just been with a family whose young child was losing his life to terminal cancer. He was not sleeping. He told his parents that he didn’t want to pray any more. He told them that he did not want the Lord to take his soul before he wakes. The parents were devastated. They felt that they had failed to help their child with love and hope in the Lord through this unthinkable process. They felt that their efforts had contributed to his pain and fear.

Driving home, I lamented, “Lord, you are all knowing, how can you let a prayer frighten a little child that you are calling home?” I made the decision to toss the plaque.

When I got home, I went straight to the garage. I had the plaque in my hand to toss when something caught my eye. I looked at the words and read them. This is what they said:

*Now I lay me down to sleep, I Pray the Lord my soul to keep. **Thine angels guard me through the night and lead me to the morning light.***

I couldn’t wait for morning to come. I brought the plaque to work and rushed to find my colleague. She looked at the plaque and teared up. She immediately called the family and asked them to stop by the clinic. When she presented them with the prayer, the child stared at the words. Seeing it in writing made it real and true. He read it over again and smiled. He had found wonder and peace. He told his parents “I know that Jesus loves me.” The parents found a comforting assurance. The new words changed the tone of their sad season and renewed their trust in the Lord’s providence and love.

I later learned from my mother that the plaque was a gift to me from my godparents on the occasion my baptism. I was filled with awe. So amazing is God’s perfect timing, faithfulness, and abiding love in all the seasons of those who love Him. I am grateful for the blessing that gave my heart eyes to see.

**Continued on next page**

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**Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep continued**

The Word made flesh came into the world a poor and helpless baby to dwell among us, to touch us, to feed us and to be our light. My life is an advent of joyful hope for the time when the angels guide me through the night and lead me into the Light from Light.

**\*Remember to. Save the Date:** April 20, 2024 BSSF Formators Day, St. Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken, SC

\*The 2024 Centenary theme is [The Gift of the Stigmata](#).

Good Read: *The Five Wounds of St. Francis*, by Fr. Solanus M. Benfatti

It is a privilege to serve you and share the journey. Please to not hesitate to contact me,

May the Light of the World guide your paths all the days of your life. Merry Christmas  
Peace and all Good!

*Lynn*

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*Lynn Oeser, OFS, is the formation director at the Fraternity of Brother Francis in Newton, NC, and regional formation director.*

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# Save the Date

Get ready to enjoy prayer, fellowship and  
fresh mountain air!

**AUG. 10-12, 2024**

**Annual Regional Gathering**

**RIDGECREST CONFERENCE CENTER  
BLACK MOUNTAIN, NC**

# Six African-American Candidates for Sainthood

By Gil Donohue, OFS  
JPIC Coordinator, St. Margaret of Cortona Region

There are currently about three million African-American Catholics in the United States; they represent about 4% of church members. Our brothers and sisters in the African-American Catholic community have identified six distinguished and holy church people who they consider worthy of canonization. Some of these names may not be well known to other Catholics; several of these people lived in our mid-Atlantic area. Their stories are unique and compelling.



**Venerable Henriette Díaz DeLille, SSF** (March 11, 1813 – November 16, 1862) was a Louisiana Creole of color and Catholic nun from New Orleans. Her father was a white man from France, her mother was a "quadroon", and her grandfather came from Spain. She founded the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1836 and served as their first Mother Superior. The sisters are the second-oldest surviving congregation of African-American nuns. In 1988, the order formally opened the cause of canonization for DeLille with the Holy See. In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI declared DeLille to be Venerable. A miracle attributed to her intercession was approved by a medical board in 2013, advancing her cause.



**Venerable Pierre Toussaint** (27 June 1766 – June 30, 1853) was a Haitian-American hairdresser, philanthropist, and onetime slave brought to New York City by his owners in 1787. A candidate for sainthood, he was declared Venerable by Pope John Paul II in 1996. Freed in 1807 after the death of his mistress, Pierre took the surname of "Toussaint" in honor of the hero of the Haitian Revolution. Toussaint also became a successful barber and used his wealth for various philanthropic causes. He also helped finance the construction of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral. Credited as the de facto founder of Catholic Charities New York, Toussaint is the first and only layman to be buried in the crypt below the main altar of the current Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, generally reserved for bishops of the Archdiocese of New York.



**Servant of God Julia Greeley** ([juliagreeley.org](http://juliagreeley.org)) - Denver's Angel of Charity, was born into slavery, at Hannibal, Missouri, sometime between 1833 and 1848. While she was still a young child, a cruel slave master, in the course of beating her mother, caught Julia's right eye with his whip and destroyed it. As she lived in a boarding house, Julia's body was laid out in church, and immediately many hundreds of people began filing past her coffin to pay their grateful respect. She was buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery (sect. 8, Block 7), and to the present day many people have been asking that her cause be considered for canonization, a request which was finally granted in the Fall of 2016. As part of the Cause for Canonization, Julia's mortal remain were transferred to Denver's Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on June 7, 2017.



**Servant of God Thea Bowman** - Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration: [fspa.org](http://fspa.org) - (born Bertha Elizabeth Bowman; December 29, 1937 – March 30, 1990) was a Black Catholic religious sister, teacher, musician, liturgist and scholar who made major contributions to the ministry of the Catholic Church toward African Americans. She became an evangelist among her people, assisted in the production of an African-American Catholic hymnal, and was a popular speaker on faith and spirituality in her final years, in addition to recording music. She also helped found the National Black Sisters' Conference to provide support for African-American women in Catholic religious life. She died of cancer in 1990. In 2018, the Diocese of Jackson opened her cause for sainthood, and she was designated a Servant of God.



**Venerable Father Augustus Tolton** (April 1, 1854 – July 9, 1897), baptized Augustine Tolton, was the first Catholic priest in the United States publicly known to be Black. (The Healy brothers, who preceded him, all passed for White.) Tolton was ordained in Rome in 1886. Assigned to the Diocese of Alton (now the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois), Tolton first ministered at his home parish in Quincy, Illinois before opposition from local White Catholics and Black protestants caused discord. Reassigned to Chicago, Tolton led the development and construction of St. Monica's Catholic Church as a Black "national parish," completed in 1893 at 36th and Dearborn Streets on Chicago's South Side. Soon after, he died of a heat stroke at the age of 43 in 1897. Tolton's cause for canonization was opened in 2010, and he was declared Venerable by Pope Francis in June 2019.



**Servant of God Mother Mary Lange**, foundress of the Oblate Sisters of Providence and first superior general of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, took the religious name of Mary. She was superior general from 1829 to 1832, and from 1835 to 1841. This congregation would educate and evangelize African Americans. Yet they would always be open to meeting the needs of the times. Thus the Oblate Sisters educated youth and provided a home for orphans. Slaves who had been purchased and then freed were educated and at times admitted into the congregation. They nursed the terminally ill during the cholera epidemic of 1832, sheltered the elderly, and even served as domestics at Saint Mary's Seminary.

*All images in public domain.*



### Three Fraternities Participate in 2023 Diocese of Charlotte Eucharistic Congress

Members of St, Maximillian Kolbe, Fraternity of Brother Francis and St. Francis of the Hills fraternities came together to attend the 2023 Diocese of Charlotte Eucharistic Congress. They participated in the Eucharistic procession, attended talks, attended adoration, confession and Mass. They also joined together to set up an information booth to represent Secular Franciscans. The group presented "Happy Centenary Cards" to Franciscan Friars Conventual from Our Lady of the Angels Province, and Capuchin Franciscan Friars from the Province of the Sacred Stigmata. One of the Friars helped with translation for some Spanish speaking people who were inquiring about our order. It was a beautiful day of fellowship, prayer and joy. - Lynn Oeser, OFS

# Peace Begins with Us at Home

By Allisen Salerno,, OFS  
BSSF Regional JPIC Animator



I find it difficult to absorb the news of the Oct. 7 terror attack in Israel and the loss of tens of thousands of civilian lives in Gaza. What can we do?

Peace takes work. It begins with seeking and offering forgiveness within our own families. As we gather for Christmas with our extended families, we need to adopt a humble approach to those interactions. *“God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble (James 4:6).”*

I grew up the youngest of four children with parents who were overwhelmed by and unprepared for the demands of four babies in five years and by my mother’s cancer diagnosis after she lost two more children in utero. Our family dynamics were, to put it kindly, dynamic.

My father lived until 90. My mother is thriving at nearly 93. Those years gave me time to mature in my understanding and to connect as one adult to another. God granted me the wisdom and strength to forgive.

In some families, the damage inflicted on children can be so great that “going no contact” with one’s parents is the wisest course. This is an exception to my belief that time - and prayer and daily conversion of our hearts and, yes, therapy - heals. As Secular Franciscans, our duty is to try to make reconciliation happen.

This Christmas, my husband and I are driving to South Florida to spend the week with my mother. One son is flying in from Washington, D.C., with his girlfriend.

As generations gather, we can apply the OFS-USA National Theme - Listen, Discern, Go Forth - to the people God puts before us. Let’s strive to listen to others’ perspectives without feeling the need to be “right” about ours. Let’s not indulge our pride by offering - or even forming - an opinion about every news item.

As Saint Francis tells us, we “should not be quarrelsome or take part in disputes with words . . . or criticize others; but ...gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to everyone. Whatever house they enter...first say, ‘Peace to this house.’”



Allison Salerno, OFS, is a member of the Fraternity of the Stigmata of Saint Francis in Johns Creek, Georgia. She is also the regional JPIC animator.

# Budget, Contributions Responsibility of All

By Ellen Ferrone, OFS  
BSSF Regional Minister

Article 25 of our Rule calls us to contribute to the financial well-being of our fraternity and upward.

*Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils<sup>44</sup>.*

This contribution to our common fund can occur monthly, quarterly, yearly, whichever fits into your personal budgeting. Like our families, each fraternity has a budget.

I hope you are all aware of this and have visibility into your fraternities' financial activities.

Examples of items that might be budgeted include a stipend for your spiritual assistant, donation to the organization where the gatherings are held, funds to support your apostolates, for an annual retreat, to create a scholarship to help those attend an annual retreat or the Annual Regional Gathering, cards and postage to keep in touch with our homebound – you get the picture. Also in this budgeting are funds to contribute to the region.

Everyone contributes to the income of the fraternity. The items addressed above are the expenses. Each of the above items should be listed in the budget under the appropriate month it is sent out. The contribution to the region is once a year in the first quarter.

Your donations throughout the year help cover this expense. Just as you determine the stipend for your spiritual assistant, the region requests \$50 per professed and candidate.

The region in turn sends a check to the National Executive Council for \$17 per professed and candidate.

Talking about money is not something most people want to engage in. Yet we all know it's a fact of life. I hope this short explanation has been helpful.

Here is a link to a more detailed explanation from one of our previous national ministers, Tom Bello, OFS.

<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/March-2014-%E2%80%93-Another-Perhaps-Lenten-Look-at-Fair-Share-With-a-Short-and-a-Long-Answer.pdf>

With peace and joy  
Ellen

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## The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life

Spirituality



Formation



Fraternity

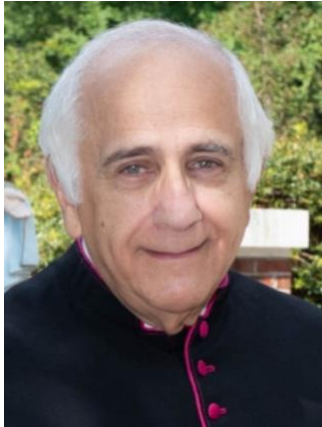


Apostolate





# Tribute to Msgr. Bellow, friend to Franciscans



By Jennye Taylor Johnson, OFS  
Vice-minister St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity

Sister Death welcomed, Monsignor Richard Bellow, 80, on November 13.

Fr. Richard was my priest, my former pastor, my spiritual director of 35 years, my friend, and my brother in Christ and St. Frances of Assisi.

He was with us at our November fraternity gathering... and oh, what wise words he gave us. Little did we know that around 10 days later he would be leaving us to meet the Jesus he always loved and served.

I share this with you, as Fr. Richard was once an OFM Conventual friar. It was because of him that our St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity was established in 1989. We were not a region at that time but under the obedience of the Immaculate Conception Province in Staten Island, NY.

Fr. Richard played a huge role as we went from provinces to regions. He was the first spiritual assistant for the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region.

After he left the Franciscan Order, Fr. Richard eventually became the spiritual assistant once again for our St. Maximilian Kolbe fraternity as a Diocesan priest. He did that for quite a while before his retirement. He told me that he missed Franciscan community, and so he began attending our monthly fraternity gatherings. What a blessing.

After Fr. Linus's passing, Fr. Richard came to the Annual Regional Gathering to make sure we had a priest to say Mass for us.

He never forgot about his roots. Let us never forget him.

I posted news of his passing on my Facebook page. I received the following comment from a young woman, who in her youth, was a member of my parish when Fr. Richard was there as a Franciscan friar.

“ My Catholic spirit comes from what he modeled for us at St. John Neumann Catholic Church. He taught us so much just by being him.”

This speaks volumes about who he was as a Franciscan with his huge Franciscan heart.

By the way, this young woman now lives in the Charleston area and contacted me several years ago asking me about the Secular Franciscan Order. Renee Kerr is now professed Secular Franciscan.

<https://www.carolinafuneral.com/obituary/Richard-Bellow>

# News from Around the Region

## St. Thomas More Fraternity Elects New Council



St. Thomas More Fraternity in Wilmington, NC, elected a new council on Nov. 12.

Left to right are: Bud Tascone, Treasurer; Steve Ditullio, Vice Minister; Robert (Bob) Pape, Minister; Janet Glatt, Secretary, Bonnie Laurino, Director of Formation; and Mike Yamat, Councilor

## St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity Elects New Council

New council members elected at St. Michael the Archangel Fraternity in Spartanburg, SC, are: (front row) Joanne Babin, Secretary; Shizuko Klatte, Councilor; (back row) Paula Duncan, Formation Director; Bonnie Wacker, Treasurer; Michaelleen Davis, Minister; Sandra Rodriguez, Councilor; Betsy Witt, Vice-Minister. They were elected at the fraternity gathering on November 18.



*“With the shepherds, let us bow down before the Lamb, let us worship God’s goodness made flesh, and let us allow tears of repentance to fill our eyes and cleanse our hearts.”* Pope Francis

## Newly Forming Padre Pio Fraternity Professes Members



The newly forming Padre Pio fraternity had six members make their permanent profession on Saturday, Sept. 30, at Our Lady of Grace Church in Indian Land, SC. They were professed into their sponsoring Fraternity, Saint Clare of Assisi Fraternity, Aiken SC.

From left to right are: Patricia Hunter, OFS; Karen Perry, OFS; Lonny Persica, OFS; Vicki Persica, OFS; Tom Veltri, OFS; Father Jeffrey Kirby, STD; Rose Clawson, OFS; Lenore Myers, OFS; and John Myers OFS.

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*“O Father, in your Truth (that is to say, in your Son, humbled, needy and homeless) you have humbled me. He was humbled in the womb of the Virgin, needy in the manger of the sheep, and homeless on the wood of the Cross. Nothing so humbles the proud sinner as the humility of Jesus Christ’s humanity.”* **St. Anthony of Padua**

## Four Stigmata of St. Francis members make permanent profession



**From left to right are Tams Nicholson, OFS; Allisen Salerno, OFS; Danny Navarro, OFS; Jack Farren, OFS; and Lori Shaver, OFS. Minister Margi Williams, OFS, is leading them in the ceremony.**

By Allisen Salerno, OFS  
BSSF Regional JPIC Animator

On a breezy Saturday morning in Jasper, Georgia, four people deepened their commitment to the Catholic faith by professing as members of the Secular Franciscan Order. The Rite of Profession for the Secular Franciscan Order within the Mass was celebrated by Father Tri Nguyen, pastor of Our Lady of the Mountains. These four individuals are now professed members of the Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis, Johns Creek, GA. One other person recommitted to her vocation as a Secular Franciscan. A reception, co-hosted by the Martyrs of Siroke Brijeg of Blairsville, GA, followed in the parish hall.

Describing himself as an “undercover Franciscan,” Father Tri explained his mother is a Secular Franciscan and that he was raised in a Franciscan parish in Vietnam. “So you pick up the things from

them without knowing it and just come out every time you interact with people.” The “core of Franciscan spirituality,” he said, is the focus on the Incarnation and on the humility of Christ.

The newly professed are: Jack Farren OFS, Danny Navarro OFS, Tams Nicholson OFS, and Allison Salerno OFS. Jack, whose Navy career took him to postings across the globe, is from Entergy Corporation and a parishioner at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Cumming, GA.

Danny attends St. Peter Chanel in Roswell, GA and is the general manager for Woodstock-based PDQ Services. Both Tams and Allison attend the Catholic Center at the University of Georgia.

Tams is executive director of The Mary T. and Frank L. Hoffman Family Foundation.

Allison is an independent journalist and audio producer. At the Mass, Lori Shaver, OFS, wife to Deacon Thomas Shaver of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marietta, GA, recommitted to the Secular Franciscan Order.

“As a lifelong Catholic, my profession strengthens my commitment to the teachings of Christ and helps me see the image of God in each person I encounter. The fraternity meetings are strengthening my faith because I hear others' spiritual paths and struggles,” Danny said.

Attendees said later they appreciated Father Tri’s inspiring homily and that Stigmata of St. Francis Minister Margi Williams, OFS, had arranged for the Mass to be broadcast on Microsoft Teams for those who could not join in person.



**Fraternity members from the Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity of Blairsville, GA, joined in the celebration of the profession through a BSSF grant.**

The Archdiocese of Atlanta is home to three fraternities and an emerging one. The Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis at St. Benedict Church was canonically established on September 10, 2011, now has 23 professed members and three to four individuals going through Initial Formation.

We thank the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region for approving our Joint Fraternities event application for this Profession. We also wish to express a very special thank you to the brothers and Sisters of the Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Fraternity, Blairsville, GA, not only for joining us for this special occasion, but for also adding their special talents to the celebration of the Mass along with organizing and being a special part of the reception afterwards. This event allowed the brothers and sisters of our two fraternities a special time to interact with and to get to know each other.

## Franciscans celebrate at Eucharistic Congress



**Three fraternities attended the 2023 Diocese of Charlotte Eucharistic Congress together. They are St. Maximilian Kolbe, Fraternity of Brother Francis and St. Francis of the Hills.**

Members of St. Maximilian Kolbe, Fraternity of Brother Francis and St. Francis of the Hills fraternities came together to attend the 2023 Diocese of Charlotte Eucharistic Congress.

They participated in the Eucharistic procession, attended talks, attended adoration, confession and Mass.

They also joined together to set up an information booth to represent Secular Franciscans. The group presented "Happy Centenary Cards" to Franciscan Friars Conventual from Our Lady of the

Angels Province, and Capuchin Franciscan Friars from the Province of the Sacred Stigmata.

One of the Friars helped with translation for some Spanish speaking people who were inquiring about our order. It was a beautiful day of fellowship, prayer and joy.



## Transitus celebrated at St. Mark Catholic Church, Wilmington, NC



St. Thomas More Fraternity, Wilmington, NC, celebrated the Transitus, October 3 in the chapel of St. Mark, Catholic Church, also in Wilmington. In addition to our fraternity, three guests from Our Lady Star of the Sea in North Myrtle Beach joined us in celebrating the Transitus. After the service the rest of us gathered for a delicious Italian dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Left to right: Mike Yamat, OFS; Gary Wool, OFS; Bob Pate, OFS; Ray Zenere, Tau;\* Kathy Tannone, Tau\*; Ruth Jonyer, Tau;\* Linda Kier, OFS; Marie Mallon, OFS; Celia Laurenco, OFS; Brenda Wells, OFS; Carlos Laurenco, OFS; Jean Wool, Inquirer; Mary

Hellmann, OFS; Janet Glatt, OFS; Bud Tascone, OFS. Photo by Joe Wells

*\*The Tau Community at Our Lady Star of the Sea is a Franciscan Community seeking to live their lives in the spirit of St. Francis and Claire of Assisi. Their inspirational text is Live Like Francis – Reflections on Franciscan Life in the World. They wear the Tau as a symbol of their membership.*

## BSSF Funds Joint Retreat in South Carolina for Fraternity Members



A joint retreat was held on Oct. 21 with St. Thomas More Fraternity, Wilmington, NC and Blessed John Duns Scotus, Murrells Inlet, SC, along with the Tau Group from Our Lady Star of the Sea in North Myrtle Beach, SC.

This was made possible with a grant from the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region.

It was held at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Murrells Inlet, SC, with Fr. Emerson Rodriguez, OFM serving as the retreat leader. Fr. Emerson is serving at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in Myrtle Beach, SC. The focus of his talks was "The Franciscan Embrace of the Other and St. Francis" and "Pope Francis: Franciscan Legacy". The day included lots of food, lively dialog, and closed with the reflections on the Our Father from St. Francis.

## Regional Schedule of Visitations (V) and Elections (E) & Meetings

\*confirmed

Date	Minister	Fraternity	Event
Jan. 12	Susan McArthur	St. Elizabeth of Hungary Augusta, GA	E
Jan. 14	Margi Williams	Stigmata of St. Francis Johns Creek, GA	E
Feb. 9-10	Matthew Moore	Martyrs of Siroki Brijeg Blairsville, GA	V
Feb. 18*	Paul Rock	Sts. Francis and Clare Knoxville, TN	E
March 9-10	Paul Semmens	Channel of Peace Chattanooga, TN	V
March 12	Betti Longinotti	Fraternity of St. Clare Winston-Salem	V
March 24*	Sharon Winzeler	Padre Pio Raleigh, NC	E
April 5-7	Regional Fraternity Gathering	Holiday Inn Anderson, SC	
April 14	Joan Rogers	Blessed Solanus Casey Morehead City, NC	E
May 3-4	Nannette Perrone	Mother Cabrini Anderson, SC	V
June 1	JC Liu	St. Maximilian Kolbe Charlotte, NC	E
June 23	Christine Washington	St. Joseph of Cupertino Bessemer, AL	E
July 14-15	Cathy Chapon	St. Clare Asheville, NC	V
Aug. 9-11	Annual Regional Gathering	Ridgecrest Conference Center Black Mountain, NC	

Viewpoint

# Are we Jews? Are Arabs our Cousins?

By Margi Williams  
BSSF Area 1 Councilor

As Franciscans, as we endeavor to live Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel, we can have the opportunity to interact with and to dialogue with people of other faiths and cultures. Recent events in the Middle East have led me to reflect on my personal experiences and dialogue with both Jews and Arabs.

I grew up in the Catskill Mountains, a predominantly Jewish resort region just north of New York City. My classmates were Jewish and Jewish merchants were our family friends. Yiddish-speaking Hasidic Jews were a common sight. Fast forward, as a nurse for over 40 years, I have had the opportunity to interact with many individuals from the Middle East – both patients and coworkers.

Are we Catholics spiritual descendants of Jews? Are the Arabic peoples our cousins? The seven Covenants of our faith track the progression of God's revelation of Himself to a group of people who, at the time of Jacob, became known as Jews. As Christians, we are recipients of God's Covenantal Revelation to the Jewish people. Tragically, hatred of Jews has a long history.

So, what is the origin of the Arab peoples? Abraham had two sons: Isaac and Ishmael. As it has been explained to me, Arab Muslims trace their heritage back to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac and then the line of Ishmael. They also trace their heritage back to the line of Esau, twin son of Isaac who sold his birthright to Jacob.

Is what going on really a family struggle? Are old wounds still open?

Recently, Palestinian Muslims with whom I interact have told me they don't hate the Jewish people; it is the political leaders with whom they have a problem. I am told that Palestinians were previously known as Philistines. Prior to Mohammad, Palestinians were pagans and worshiped idols and that Mohammad brought them to faith in God. When Israel became a nation in 1948, some of their homes and land were taken and they have paperwork to prove their prior ownership. They say some children are taught from an early age to hate Jews and start out by throwing stones. They weep over the loss of life, especially of babies and children. They are concerned when individuals or leaders use name calling, labels and inflammatory language, which only fuels hatred and division. They are concerned about terrorists making their way into our country. They want peace.

How do we have peace not only in our own families but within the Abrahamic family? As Franciscans, we are called to dialogue. Peace starts with each one of us, with interacting with and getting to know individual people of other faiths and cultures. We may not agree, but through interpersonal dialogue, we can listen and try to find a way to live peacefully.

As Franciscan Catholic Christians, we can live out the teaching of the Prince of Peace to "love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27) Let's fervently pray for the true Peace that only our Lord can bring.



## Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Regional Executive Council Roster

Minister: Ellen Ferrone, OFS  
 Vice Minister: Martha Roman, OFS  
 Secretary: Mary Sacavage, OFS  
 Treasurer: Zubair Simonson, OFS  
 Formation Director: Lynn Oeser, OFS  
 Spiritual Assistant:  
 Position Open

### Area Councilors

#### Area 1

Margi Williams, OFS; Gabrielle Cruz-Urbe, OFS  
 AL: Bessemer;  
 GA: Athens, Blairsville, Conyers, Duluth, Jonesboro;  
 TN: Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville

#### Area 2

Becky Bresnahan, OFS; JC Liu, OFS  
 GA: Augusta, St. Simons Island;  
 NC: Asheville, Charlotte, Hendersonville, Newton;  
 SC: Aiken, Charleston, Columbia, Greenville,  
 Hilton Head Island, Spartanburg

#### Area 3

Lee Cunningham, OFS; Betti Pettinati-Longinotti, OFS  
 NC: Burlington, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville,  
 Greensboro, Morehead City, Raleigh, Wilmington,  
 Winston-Salem;  
 SC: Garden City

Archivist: Sara Nell Boggs, OFS

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Animator  
 Allisen Salerno, OFS

Multicultural Commission Chair  
 David Cruz-Urbe, OFS

Youth/Young Adult Fraternal Animator  
 Robert Dorsch, OFS

Prayer Ministry (online prayer requests)  
 Area 1: John Martin, OFS  
 Area 2: Dorothy Huebner, OFS

Area 3: Bob Sabisch, OFS  
 Fraternity prayer coordinators submit prayer requests.

Communio Editor: Sharon Winzeler, OFS

## Prayer for the Synod

**As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.**

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;  
 do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity  
 so that we may journey together to eternal life  
 and not stray from the way of truth  
 and what is right.

All this we ask of You,  
 who are at work in every place and time, in the  
 communion of the Father and the Son, forever  
 and ever.  
 Amen.



The Communio is the quarterly publication of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region of the Secular Franciscan Order. We welcome stories and photos from your fraternities. Send them to [communioeditor@gmail.com](mailto:communioeditor@gmail.com) Deadline for the next issue is Feb. 29. Please identify all individuals in photographs. Peace and all good!